

The Green Sheaf



1903

My *Sheaf* is small . . . but it is green.

I will gather into my *Sheaf* all the young fresh things I can—*pictures, verses, ballads, of love and war; tales of pirates and the sea.*

You will find ballads of the *old world* in my *Sheaf*. Are they not green for ever . . .

Ripe ears are *good for bread*, but green ears are good for *pleasure*.

LONDON

EDITED, PUBLISHED, AND SOLD BY
PAMELA COLMAN SMITH

& SOLD BY ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.

The Green Sheaf



Cecil French.

THE DREAMER AND THE WORLD.

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CAEL AND CREDHE.

Translated from the Irish by Lady Gregory.

It was on the hill they called Finntulach, the White Hill, the Fianna gathered together the time they were going to fight the battle of Fintraighe. They often stopped on that hill for a while, and they had every sort of thing there for food, beautiful blackberries, haws of the hawthorn, nuts of the hazels of Cinntire, tender twigs of the bramble bush, springs of wholesome gentian, watercress in spring-time. And there would be brought to their cooking pots birds out of the oak woods, and squirrels from Berramain, and speckled eggs from the cliffs, and salmon out of Linnmhuine, and eels of the Sionnan, and woodcocks of Fidhrinne and otters from the hidden places of the Doile, and fish from the coasts of Buie and Beare, and dulse from the bays of Clire.

And as they were going out towards Finntraighe they saw one of their young men, Cael, grandson of Nemhnain, coming towards them. "Where is it you are coming from, Cael?" Finn asked him. "From the Brugh that is to the North," said he. "What were you asking there," said Finn. "I was asking to speak with Muirenn, daughter of Derg, that was nurse to myself." "For what cause," said Finn. "It was about a high marriage, and a sweetheart of the Sidhe that was showed to me in a dream, Credhe, daughter of the king of Ciarraighe Luachra." "Do you know this, Cael," said Finn, "that she is the greatest deceiver of all the women of Ireland, and there is hardly a good thing in Ireland but she has it coaxed away to her own house." "And do you know what it is she asks of every man that comes to ask for her?" said Cael. "I know it," said Finn; "she will let no one come unless he is able to make a poem setting out a report of her horns and her cups, her grand vessels and all her palaces." "I have all that ready," said Cael; "it was given to me by Muirenn, my nurse."

They gave up the battle then for that time, and they went on over hilly places and stony places till they came to Loch Cuire in the west of Ireland. And they came to the door of the hill of the Sidhe and knocked at it with the shafts of their long gold-socketted spears. And there came young girls having yellow hair to the windows of the sunny-houses, and Credhe herself, having three times fifty women with her, came out to speak with them. "It is to ask you in marriage we are come," said Finn then. "Who is it is looking for me?" said she. "It is Cael the brave, the hundred-killer, grandson of Nemhnain son of the King of Leinster in the East." "I have heard talk of him, but I have never seen him," said Credhe. "And has he any poem for me?" she said. "I have that," said Cael, and he rose up then, and he sang his poem.

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“A journey I have to make, and it is no easy journey, to the house of Credhe against the breast of the mountain, at the Paps of Dana ; it is there I must be going through hardships, through the length of seven days.

“It is pleasant her house is, with men and boys and women, with druids and people of music, with cup-bearer and doorkeeper, with horse-boy that does not leave his work, with distributor to share food ; and Credhe of the fair hair in command over them all. It would be delightful to me in her house, with coverings and with down, if she has but a mind to listen to me.

“A bowl she has with juice of berries in it for darkening her eyebrows ; crystal vats of fermenting grains ; beautiful cups and vessels. Her house is of the colour of lime ; there are rushes for beds and many coverings of silk and many blue cloaks ; red gold, and bright drinking horns.

“Her sunny-house is beside Loch Cuire, it is made of silver and yellow gold ; its ridge is thatched without any fault, with the crimson wings of birds. The doorposts are green, the lintel is of silver taken in battle ; Credhe's chair, to the left, is the delight of delights, covered with gold of Elga ; at the foot of her pleasant bed it is, the bed that was made of gold and precious stones by Tuile in the east. Another bed there is to the right, of gold and silver, made without any fault ; curtains it has with the appearance of the flower of the foxglove.

“The people of her house, it is they that have delight ; their cloaks are not faded white, they are not worn smooth ; their hair is fair and curling. Men in their wounds would sleep hearing the singing of the birds of the Sidhe on the eaves of her sunny-house.

“If I owe any thanks to Credhe, to whom the cuckoo calls, she will get better praise again than this ; if the love service I have done is pleasing to her, let her not delay, let her say ‘your coming is pleasing to me.’

“A hundred feet there are in her house from one corner to another ; twenty feet fully measured is the width of her great door ; her roof is thatched with the wings of blue and yellow birds, the border of her well is of crystal and carbuncles. There is a vat there of the bronze of kings, the juice of pleasant malt is running from it ; over the vat is an apple tree with its heavy fruit. When Credhe's horn is filled from the vat four apples fall into it together.”

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“She that owns all these things at low water and at flood, Credhe from the hill of the three paps, she is beyond all the women of Ireland by the length of a spearcast.

“Here is this song for her ; it is no sudden bride-gift, no hurried asking. I bring it to Credhe of the beautiful shape that my coming may be very bright to her.”

After that Credhe took him for her husband, and the wedding feast was made, and all the Fianna stopped there through seven days, at drinking and pleasure, and in want of no good thing.

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THE FAIRY DANCE.



STRANGE, how she heard the music calling
All the day long till night was falling,
Then away and away from the homes of men,
She sped through the depths of the haunted glen
To the far hill-top where the grass is worn,
By the dancers' feet, to a shaven lawn.
And there she danced, through the summer night,
With fairy folk in the blue moon-light,
Swaying and dancing the hours away
In the fairy ring on the Eve of May.

And none can forget who that music hear,
For its echoes ring in the listener's ear ;
And whoever with fairy hands enlaced
Has but once through those mystic mazes paced
They may wander away the whole world o'er,
Yet echoing strains from the Fairy Shore
Come calling them back to the far green hill,
Where the good little people are dancing still ;
And the moons may wax and the moons may wane,
That calling may never be heard in vain.
Oh, many the spirits of wandering maids
That are drawn back there in the evening shades,
For she who has taken the Fairies' dole
Will never know rest for her aching soul,
You may tell, from her walk and her eyes so still,
The girl who has danced on the Fairy Hill.

Alix Egerton.

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A MAY MADRIGAL.

MAY comes clad in gleaming gold,
The World grows young that was so old,
All so sweet, all so fair,
Birds are singing everywhere :

Come away !

Come sing and answer them again,
Answer Boys and Girls again,
And welcome in the May !

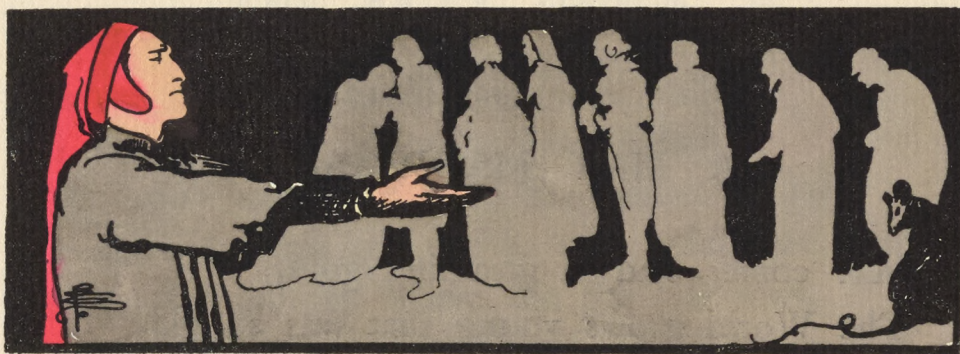
Mary guard the woods from teen,
Donning now their virgin green !
All be fair, all be sweet
Where in the woodlands lovers meet !

All who love true

Come and charm the woods with song,
Glad voices charm the woods with song,
And welcome Love in too !

John Todhunter.

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THE LAMENT OF A LYCEUM RAT.

“YES,” said the last rat, “they say that rats leave the sinking ship ; so they do—another trait in common with humanity. Why ? Because both men and rodents must live ! For though the necessity for our existence does not seem obvious to men, it is so to a far higher power, and therefore we live and seek the means withal.

“I am the last rat left here. I had hoped to find shelter in the Lyceum to the end, but,” he said abruptly, “I am starving.” He leapt to the edge of the dress circle where I sat gloomily gazing at the deserted stage.

“Ravenous, I roamed over the house just before dawn. All I could find to gnaw was a fragment of hare’s-foot and an old grease rag which some of you people had left on departing. I crept down again cold and weary, when suddenly the old familiar staircase seemed thronged with crowds of men and women and little children all hurrying away. I crouched in fear, but they did not touch me nor heed me in any way.

“Brave men in armour, priests, lovers, fair girls, witches, nuns, dancers—a whole rabble of beings from every page of history and romance—they rushed past me like the eddies of a strong tide, flowing rapidly away and out into the night. Then as they left me, scared and

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trembling, I raced across the stage that was filled with a light subdued but intensely clear, and once more I looked upon Hamlet, Shylock with sweet Portia, Mephistopheles with Margaret and the ill-fated Faust, The Vicar with the Squire and lovely Olivia, incomparable Beatrice and Benedick, the Martyr King with his Queen and Cromwell, Macbeth, Napoleon, the bloodthirsty Louis XI., the tortured Matthias, Robespierre, Richelieu, and countless others. And the old house glowed and breathed

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again in their gracious presence, but where as all that motley rout that had fled away bore in their eyes a look of expectancy, restlessly trying to read the future, these all seemed rapt and calm and full of peace.

“Suddenly the shapes all bowed down, swaying like trees before the autumn winds, and a tall form appeared before them—Dante! They made way, fell back and left him—left him standing alone. Then he spoke : ‘May I not join you, O my comrades?’ And he stretched out his hands toward them in greeting.

“But they bowed again and answered with mournful voices, ‘No, Master, you have fresh fields to fight—fresh victories to gain. Here only memories can live, and like memories we must cling here until your magic hand shall beckon us to life again. You alone can call us back. Go, Master! Hope shall not leave you, but will lead you forth that you may give to the world yet another creation. Bid Dante live at your bidding, even as we lived ; human that mankind may love ; divine that souls may be lifted nearer to Heaven.’

“Then the Master turned and went, Courage and Hope beside him, though Sorrow fell weeping at his feet. . . . This,” said the last rat, “is the vision I saw last night. I leave my home and its dear memories, for even I must live my life.” A ray of sunshine strayed in and he vanished seeking the darkness, while sadly I wandered out into the light.

Mary Brown.



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TIME.

AROUND the clock the hours run,
By the moon and by the sun.
Twenty-four, the day is done.

Around the clock the hours go,
Summer sun and winter snow.
Every secret time doth know.

P. C. S.



THE TURNING OF THE TIDE.

FAILURE is mine, but through the thrusting spears
I see the triumphs of the coming years.

Fate's ebb and flow has ever been our part,
But, ah, the stranded sea-wrack of the heart.

Ne'er shines so bright a triumph but shall keep
The shadow of its failure's shadowy sleep.

Cecil French.

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“JUVENILES.”

IT was in the Provinces.

Everybody in the restaurant was looking at them, and they were looking at everybody in the restaurant.

“‘Jealousy is the essence of love,’ or ‘love is the essence of jealousy,’ isn’t it?” he said to her, running his fingers through his hair. “I read the part, too! Never mind; it runs all right, and the audience don’t stop to analyse.”

He was fat in the face, and carried off his forty years and his blue linen lay-down collar very well.

She was robed in black and fingered a string of coral beads, and she glanced furtively towards my table in displaying the curves of her ten-shillings-a-night throat; treating us all to a free rehearsal, as she sipped her expensive liqueur.

“I don’t see the rationale of it, do you? Give me two drops of Ibsen in two large penn’orths of Pinero, and I am content.”

They were puppets; clowns; and, as such, played to amuse the theatre-going public. What cared they about the improvement of public taste?

Actors are not the only mummers in this world, after all.

Bernhard Smith.

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WILL O' THE WISP.



HE cottage stood at the edge of a dreary swamp. Dark rushes grew at the margin, and shivered and trembled as the wind blew through them, seeking to bend them to the cold surface of the water. Heavy mists rose slowly from the swamp, mingling with the twilight, and wreathing themselves into strange, uncouth forms. And through the mists across the swamp moved a pale phantom flame. The child looked through the cottage window and watched it, and

shivered as he looked. He hated the swamp and the pale light, and yet it held him with a strange fascination. Night after night, when his mother thought him sleeping, he crept from his bed and sat with his little pale face pressed against the tiny window. The light drew him, and he had to go. He knew what it was though his mother had never told him. The children had whispered it when he went to the School that lay in the bright village right away on the other side of the swamp. And ever since, he had watched night after night the pale light which he now knew was the soul of his little sister who had died unbaptized. He dared not tell his mother for she cried when the little nameless one was mentioned, but he thought the more. It was there to-night, clearer than usual, and the child sat watching. It must be so lonely, the little wandering soul. He sought for it often by day but never found it. If he could have spoken to it, if it could have told him that it knew he watched at the window he might have been happier. He wished he knew. He pushed back the lattice, and leaning his face on his hands stared out into the night. There down away on the swamp was the light. He could see it quite plainly in spite of the mists across the marshy ground.

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"Little baby," he whispered, "I am watching. Oh! do you hear! I am watching."

But the wind only moaned gently round him, bringing no answer to the little lonely figure.

"Baby!" he called again, and his voice broke with a sob.

"It's no use," he said softly, "she can't hear, I must go."

Slipping on his clothes he stole softly down the narrow stairs, and out at the door.

How lonely and dark it was. His lips trembled and the tears filled his eyes, but he went bravely forward. Now he seemed quite near the light, but as he moved it went away.

"Baby!" he called, "don't go, I am coming, baby!"

But still the light moved on.

"Baby, I won't hurt you, I only want to have you in my arms. You were so little, and it must be so lonely."

A little further he went, and stretched out his arms. A cry as the cry of a wounded curlew broke the stillness of the night. Then silence, deep, impenetrable, settled over the lonely marsh.

Leslie Moore.



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